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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SAN JOSE 002037

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SUBJECT: ANOTHER POLL SHOWS MAJORITY OF COSTA RICANS SUPPORT CAFTA-DR

REF: (A) SAN JOSE 01787

(B) SAN JOSE 01875

1. According to a poll conducted in August 2005 by UNIMER for the daily "La Nacion," 54 percent of the 1,413 persons polled supported the U.S.-Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), up from 43 percent in a similar poll conducted for "La Nacion" in November 2004. Twenty-six percent of those polled believe that the agreement should be rejected, down from 38 percent in November. Seventy-six percent of those polled said that they were aware that the U.S. Congress already had ratified CAFTA-DR.

2. The poll also revealed that men support CAFTA-DR more than women (61.2, and 45.2 percent in favor, 21.1, and 31.1 opposed, respectively), and a larger percentage of men claimed to have knowledge of the CAFTA-DR ratification process (80 percent for men versus 71.8 percent for women). Those not expressing support for or opposition to CAFTA-DR either had no opinion or did not believe that CAFTA-DR would have much of an effect. Those respondents who live in the rural zones of the greater metropolitan San Jose area had the highest support for CAFTA-DR (66.3 percent in favor, and 21.0 percent against). There are many agriculture-related industries in these areas, such as ornamental plant, coffee, and flower growers, that rely heavily on exports to the U.S.

3. In the urban greater metropolitan San Jose area, which is the most populated area and was the most represented in the poll with 508 total respondents, 57.1 percent expressed support for CAFTA-DR, and 27.7 percent expressed opposition. The geographical area that showed the highest opposition to CAFTA-DR at approximately 30 percent was the Central Valley area outside of the greater metro San Jose area. Forty-one percent of respondents who live in this area expressed support for CAFTA-DR. The other 30 percent either had no opinion or did not think CAFTA-DR would make much of a difference.

4. Support for the agreement also varied with the education level of the respondent. The higher level of education achieved, the stronger the support for CAFTA-DR. University-educated respondents showed a 58.9 percent level of support (27.1 percent opposed); high school graduates 52.6 percent (26.6 percent opposed); primary school graduates 51 percent (24.6 percent opposed); and lower education levels 38.2 percent (21.5 percent opposed).

5. Also, the poll revealed that respondents from higher socio-economic levels were more likely to support the agreement than were respondents from lower socio-economic levels. The poll identified that 66.4 percent of those respondents from a high socio-economic level favored CAFTA-DR (16.4 percent opposed); 52.9 percent from the medium socio-economic level (28.8 percent opposed); and 50.9 percent from the low socio-economic level (22.5 percent opposed).

6. With regard to age groups, the under 18-year-old group showed the weakest support (47 percent in favor and 31.3 percent opposed), while support was strongest among those between 18 and 29 years of age (59.5 percent in favor, 26.3 percent opposed), followed by the 30-to-39 year-olds (55.9 percent in favor, 22 percent opposed), 50-to 69-year-olds (47.0 percent in favor, 26.4 percent opposed), and the 40-to-49 (47 percent in favor, 29.4, percent opposed).

7. "La Nacion's" report on the UNIMER poll also revealed that one third of those polled said that a presidential candidate's stance on CAFTA-DR would affect how they vote in the next election in February 2006. Of this third, 62 percent said that they would be more likely to support a candidate who is in favor of CAFTA-DR while 34 percent said

they would be more likely to support a candidate opposed to CAFTA-DR.

COMMENT

18. The results from this poll are consistent with other polls conducted recently (Refs A and B). A majority of Costa Ricans polled expressed support for CAFTA-DR, which has grown over the last nine months as the citizenry has become more informed. This most recent poll also revealed that the highest level of support was from 18-29-year-old Costa Ricans and those who live in heavily agricultural areas that rely on trade with the U.S. This is notable because some CAFTA-DR opponents have said that farmers oppose the agreement because it will hurt them and that young Costa Ricans, especially University students, are opposed to the agreement. The results from this most recent poll do not support these contentions.
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